

The Magazine Rack

By Robert P. Jordan

THE QUESTION of what's fit to print has as many answers as there are newspapers and magazines, and as many aspects as there are fish in the sea. A facile writer can skirt the laws of libel; a skilled photographer can easily blur the distinction between decency and indecency. There also is the news which the press thinks the public has a right to know and the Government thinks is none of the public's business. Secrecy is a halter on freedom, but freedom may depend on the secrets it can keep.

It is a complex problem and a growing one. Mr. Kennedy recently tried to deal with it; editors of the Nation's good newspapers have been struggling with it for years. Now comes Louis M. Lyons, curator of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, to take a crack at it in the *New Republic*. How much constraint should the press exercise, for instance, in dealing with the Central Intelligence Agency? Should, as the President suggested, there be a man in the middle, privy to secret material, who could guide newspapers on questions concerning security?

Lyons says what there is to say, and briefly, too, for all sides. But he returns at the end to something he quoted in the beginning: a newspaper's primary obligation is to its readers. That, responsibly interpreted, covers everything, he avows. And adds: "But first it needs to be posted in a lot of city rooms and newspaper publishers' offices."